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## HEZEKIAH BEARDSLEY CONNECTICUT CHAPTER

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### Public Health Committee

Good afternoon, my name is Robert Zavoski, MD, MPH, President of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Medical Director of a community health center here in Hartford. I am here today to offer the support of Connecticut's pediatricians to HB 6693, An Act Concerning Creation of a State Health Care Plan, and 6697, An Act Establishing the Connecticut Health Quality Partnership.

Access to health care for children is an investment in our future and is just as important to our future as a good public education. Regrettably, too many of our children and families lack access to adequate and affordable health care. Many are uninsured; many more are under-insured by a HUSKY Program that is failing to meet our state's needs. Too many of our neighbors delay preventive health care until they are sick. They seek care where and when it is most expensive and least effective. Many have a HUSKY card in their pocket, yet cannot find a doctor to see them. Fewer and fewer doctors can afford to see these patients because HUSKY pays far below the cost to provide the care, if it pays at all. Hospitals do not have the luxury of not participating in HUSKY; their losses are forcing them to close or limit their clinics. Our health center provides primary care to all who can make it to our door; those who need specialty services beyond what we provide are increasingly out of luck. For all of these reasons, hospital emergency departments are overflowing, as is the debt they cause the hospitals. We are all paying more and more for health care, and receiving less by spending unwisely, on treatment of disease rather than on prevention of disease. This is not a health system; it is a prescription for disaster.

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that health access be **universal**, offering care which is **comprehensive, affordable, high quality, and integrated**. We support the intent of HB6693 as being consistent with this philosophy. We must emphasize that cheap health care and affordable health care are two very different things. Plans which offer low deductibles but do not cover preventive services, immunizations or other necessary services are not an improvement over the status quo. Neither are plans with high deductibles or co-pays which force patients to delay seeking care until late in their illnesses. If we continue to under-fund preventive and primary care, we will continue to bankrupt ourselves paying to care for the chronic and emergency diseases that will ultimately result from our short sightedness.

Similarly Connecticut's pediatricians support HB 6697 establishing a Connecticut Health Quality Partnership. Research demonstrates that quality care is less expensive to provide and more likely to be satisfactory to the patient. What is not as readily recognized is that quality care is also more enjoyable for the physician to provide. Connecticut's pediatricians offer our support and our assistance in making this partnership a reality.

Connecticut's pediatricians pledge to work with the General Assembly to make the dream of access to high quality health care a reality for as many of our fellow residents as possible. Thank you for your attention.